

Why Give Up?

By Jose Salazar

“Jojoy, always remember that it’s hard to defeat those who never give up.” These words were told to me by a little girl who had cancer and her words will not be forgotten.

Through eighteen years of my life I had to work harder than an average student. English is not my first language. When I arrived in Austin, Texas I only spoke Spanish, my first language. I was told by my parents and teachers that it was necessary for me to learn English as soon as possible, so what I did was to ask my teacher if she could stay after school and help me learn English. I promised to give a hundred and ten percent of my effort. During this process I had to stop attending my martial art class (kung Fu) in order to have all my attention on my studying. At times I cried and wanted to give up because it was super difficult for me. I got to a point in which I told my parents “I can’t pressure myself like this, I am just a kid.” They just smiled and said “we believe in you and we are not giving up on you.” A few minutes after complaining I would close my eyes and tell myself “Why give up if she didn’t give up at any point of her illness.” I then opened my eyes wide with a big motivation that regardless how hard the work was I would not give up. After six month of struggle and disappointments I learned English to a ninety percent level in which I could understand, read, write, and speak English. My teacher and many other counselors couldn’t believe what I had accomplished because I did something that they were trying to get many students to do whose first language was Spanish. Many of these students had been in school for two years and yet they had not come close to that level. Counselors and teachers asked, “Salazar, how did you accomplish this? What’s your method to learn a whole different language so fast?” I said, “I never give up and I gave one hundred percent of effort.” “How old are you?” one teacher asked. I replied, “I’m 7 years old

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sir.” “Wow, you have a strong mentality for your age Jose.” Jose Salazar what would you recommend the teachers do in order to help students learn English fast like you?” I said “show them that you are there to help them and not just because you get paid. Most important is not to give up on them.”

Education for me is really important, so graduating from high school became one of my long-term goals. The first year of high school was confusing and difficult for me because a semester before high school I had just got back from Mexico. I did my middle school at Monterrey Nuevo Leon Mexico. This was a big move for me again because I had no idea how high school worked, but after my first semester of ninth grade the rest of my school year was difficult, but not too hard. When my senior year came it became my worst nightmare not because classes were killing me, but because my senior year was super important since the time to apply for college and scholarships had begun. The first semester of my senior year I applied for college . I also focused on looking for scholarships on the internet and asking the businesses downtown and other places for assistance. I looked for the money like crazy, because I needed to pay for college. The second semester was game time. I started applying for scholarships and acceptance letters from colleges were arriving. Being accepted to seven colleges motivated me a lot. While applying for scholarships I got denied from them many times. This got me mad and disappointed because sixty three consecutive times I received letters saying “Dear Salazar, Jose you are a great candidate for our scholarship. We are amazed at what a hard worker you are and how much you are involved in the community, but we are sorry to not be able to provide you the scholarship award.” This made me mad. I couldn't believe it so I called the organizations and most of them said that the reason for not winning the scholarship was because I had to have a social security number. Others said “Sir. you have such great potential for succeeding and winning other

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scholarships so the provider of the money decided to give the money to students who have less chance of winning scholarship and have a social security number.” Just because of one document my dream of attending college was being crushed. I kept applying and more rejects came in. I was at scholarship number seventy and opened the letter to discover a another rejection. At that point I wanted to give up and forget going to college. I told myself, “Jose you did your part and you have worked harder than any other students, but for some reason it is not working out. Just forget about it.” That same day my college coach gave me two scholarship applications and made me fill them out in front of her. Then she told me to turn them in to the college counselor from school. I just said “ok,” but I didn’t turn them in and a week passed and I never turned them in. Then Sunday night I had a dream of the little girl who died of cancer asking me, “Jojoy, what did I tell you?” I told you to never give up.” I said, “but I have done all I can.” She said, “ you let yourself fail so now stand up with your head up high and don’t give up” I woke up looking for those scholarship applications that I had not turned in. On Monday morning I asked my friend for a ride to school. I ran to the counselor’s office and asked him if I could still turn in those two scholarship applications. , He just smiled and said, “man this is your lucky day because the deadline got extended.” That day I skipped my first two classes just to apply for lots more scholarships. I did thirty scholarships in one day. I got crazy for that day I guess. The week passed and I picked up the mail. I saw two letters for me, and I sat down on my bed and opened one with my fingers. It was another rejection letter and this got me upset so I just ignored the other letter. The next morning before I left for school I found that same letter that I had ignored on the dining table. I opened it and to my surprise it said “Dear Mr. Salazar, you have won the award of five thousand dollar for your college education.” This made my day. I told all my teachers and friends. I was super happy. Scholarship number seventy two and I finally got a yes.

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I kept applying and got lots of rejections. I thought that my luck had run out. When I was close to that point of giving up I told myself, “no Jose, not this time are you going to give up. Why give up if she never did regardless of how much pain the cancer gave her. She fought until the bell rang and her life ended so why are you going to give up.”

Scholarship one hundred and two arrived and I got the news that I had won one thousand and five hundred dollars. I was happy again, but I kept applying for more scholarships. I applied until the school year ended. In total I applied to one hundred and fifty scholarships and only two said “yes”. Thanks to my sister, who before she died, showed me that giving up wasn’t an option. My sister showed me that there is nothing wrong with being a dreamer or failing, but what is wrong is not dreaming and not standing back up after you fall.

To all the dreamers, never stop dreaming and don’t give up. If you fall just stand back up stronger. Fight for your dream until the bell rings like this little girl did. Why give up? If those who have mental and physical disabilities don’t quit you can also be a strong fighter. Why quit if those who love you don’t give up?

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